

[Cross posted on House Democratic Caucus Blog](#)

Question 1: Do I have to respond to the 2010 census?

A: Yes, participation in the 2010 census is vital and required by law.

By being counted, you're helping your community secure the resources and representation it needs and deserves. Accurate data reflecting changes in your community are crucial in deciding how almost \$450 billion in federal funding per year is allocated for projects like new hospitals, roads, job training centers, and schools. That's more than \$4 trillion over a 10-year period. Census data also determine apportionment in the U.S. House of Representatives and state legislatures.

Question 2: What happens if I don't respond? Will I be fined or punished in any way?

A: Although the law makes it a crime not to answer the decennial census, the American Community Survey and other mandatory censuses, and authorizes the courts to impose a fine of up to \$5,000 for failure to respond, the Census Bureau views this approach as a last resort. Instead, the Bureau will make every effort to help all Americans respond to this simple questionnaire.

Question 3: How do I know my information is confidential?

A: By law, the Census Bureau cannot share respondents' answers with anyone, including the IRS, FBI, CIA, local authorities, or any other government agency. All Census Bureau employees take an oath of nondisclosure and are sworn for life to protect the confidentiality of the data. The penalty for unlawful disclosure is a fine of up to \$250,000, imprisonment of up to 5 years, or both.

The Department of Justice has also concluded that provisions of the USA Patriot Act that pertain to the gathering and sharing of information do not override federal confidentiality laws when it comes to the census.

Question 4: Why am I being asked about my personal information, such as my sex, age, race, and whether or not I am a homeowner?

A: Census questions are determined in response to the data needs of federal, state, local, and tribal governments. The Bureau asks questions that will help us obtain some basic information necessary for apportionment (determining how many representatives each state gets) and redistricting (determining the boundaries for congressional districts within a state, in accordance with the Voting Rights Act). Additionally, census information is used in federal, state, and local programs to allocate hundreds of billions of dollars every year in funding.

Sex: Census data on gender are important because many federal programs must differentiate between males and females for funding, implementing and evaluating their programs. For instance, laws promoting equal employment opportunity for women require census data on gender. Also, sociologists, economists, and other researchers who analyze social and economic trends use the data. The question has been asked since 1790.

Age: Federal, state, and local governments need data about age to interpret most social and economic characteristics, such as forecasting the number of people eligible for Social Security and Medicare benefits. The data are widely used in planning and evaluating government programs and policies that provide funds or services for children, working-age adults, women of childbearing age, or the older population. The question has been asked since 1800.

Race and Hispanic origin: Race and Hispanic origin status (which is considered an ethnicity under federal guidelines) are key to implementing many federal laws and are needed to monitor compliance with the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act. State governments use the data to determine congressional, state and local voting districts. Race data are also used to assess fairness of employment practices, to monitor racial disparities in characteristics such as health and education and to plan and obtain funds for public services. The question has been asked since 1790.

Homeownership: Homeownership rates serve as an indicator of the state of the nation's economy. The data are used to administer housing programs and to inform planning decisions. In addition, owner versus renter status gives the Census Bureau an important tool for evaluating the accuracy of the census and improving counting operations, because post-census analyses have consistently shown that renters are far more likely to be missed in the census than homeowners. The question has been asked since 1890.

Question 5: Why are illegal immigrants being counted?

A: The Census Bureau is mandated by the Constitution to count everyone who lives in this country, regardless of immigration or citizenship status. Federal courts and Solicitors General from both Republican and Democratic Administrations have consistently upheld this interpretation of the Constitution's 'census clause.' The person filling out the questionnaire should include information about all household members (including him/herself) who live and sleep at the address most of the time.

Question 6: What does the 2010 census consist of?

A: The 2010 census form asks just 10 questions and comes in a package from the Census Bureau along with a postage-paid envelope. Any request for census information from the Census Bureau will be clearly identified as coming from the U.S. Census Bureau and as OFFICIAL BUSINESS of the United States.

Question 7: When is my census questionnaire due?

A: The Census Bureau asks people to mail back their forms by April 1, but there is plenty of time to do so. Households that mail back a form by about April 19 will not be visited by a census taker when census workers start going door-to-door for non-response follow-ups.

If the Census Bureau does not receive the completed questionnaire by mail, beginning May 1, a census worker will visit your home to obtain the information. All census takers carry official government badges marked with their name. You may also ask them for a picture ID from another source to confirm their identity. Some census workers might carry a "U.S. Census Bureau" bag.

If you still are not certain about their identity, please call your Local Census Office or appropriate Regional Census Center toll-free number to confirm they're employed by the Census Bureau. (Phone numbers for all of these offices are posted on the 2010 census website, 2010.census.gov.) Most importantly, census takers will NEVER, under any circumstances, ask to enter your home.

Question 8: What do I do if I don't receive a questionnaire?

A: Forty million households in low-responding census tracts are receiving replacement forms in the first two weeks of April. You can determine if your home or community will receive a second form by visiting the CUNY Census 2010 Hard-to-Count Mapping Website at www.CensusHardToCountMaps.org

If you do not receive a replacement form, you can call the Telephone Questionnaire Assistance lines (starting April 12) at 1-866-872-6868. (If you prefer a Spanish-speaking operator, then dial 1-866-928-2010).

Census questionnaires are also available at "Be Counted" centers in your local community. To find a nearby "Be Counted" center where you can pick up a form, visit <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/take10map/> and:

- Click "Find a Questionnaire Assistance Center"
- Type in your Zip Code
- Click the blue and white push pins to see the day/hours of operation for the Questionnaire Assistance Center of your choice.

Please also be aware that the Census Bureau is not delivering census forms to P.O. boxes. Instead, it will be delivering forms to individual's physical addresses. If you do not receive your census form by April 12, please call the number above or stop by a "Be Counted" center.

Questionnaire Assistance Centers and Be Counted sites will close after April 19.

Question 9: How do I obtain a census job?

A: The Census Bureau is recruiting temporary, part-time census takers for the 2010 census. These short-term jobs offer good pay, flexible hours, paid training, and reimbursement for authorized work-related expenses, such as mileage incurred while conducting census work. Best of all, census takers work right in their own communities.

Most hiring will take place in April 2010 and most census takers will work for six to eight weeks, starting May 1 and continuing through June and possibly into early July, again depending on how quickly the door-to-door visits are completed in each area. Job offers depend on several factors, such as the availability of work in your community, test score, language skills, veterans' preference, and the number of hours you are available to work each week.

To apply for a census job, call your Local Census Office and schedule an appointment to take the employment test. Use the Bureau's [interactive map](#) to find the local phone number of the nearest Local Census Office.

You may also call the Census Bureau's toll-free Jobs Line at 1-866-861-2010. TTY users should call the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

You can also access the application materials at: <http://2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs/application-material/index.php>. There is a Practice Test on the website, as well. Please bring your completed application, I-9 Form, and [proper identification](#) to your scheduled testing session.

Do not mail your application or I-9 Form.

Applications must be submitted in person, on the day of your employment test.

Question 10: I've gotten more than one piece of mail that appears to be a census form. How can I tell which one is real?

A: One possibility is that your address was also selected to be part of the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS), which replaced the decennial census long form, provides communities with detailed population and housing characteristics every year instead of once every 10 years like the decennial census. Households in the ACS sample must respond both to that survey and the 2010 census. The 2010 census and the American Community Survey are both vitally important in ensuring that your community receives its fair share of government funding for education, transportation, neighborhood improvements, and much more.

Another possibility is that you've received a fraudulent form from organizations posing as the Census Bureau. Please know that any request for census information from the Census Bureau will be clearly identified as coming from the U.S. Census Bureau and as OFFICIAL BUSINESS of the United States. If you still are not certain about origin of the mail, please call your Local Census Office or appropriate Regional Census Center toll-free number to confirm. (Phone numbers for all of these offices are posted on the 2010 census website, 2010.census.gov.)